



# Public Land Corps

## Integrating Urban Communities and National Parks

### Santa Monica Mountains NRA and Manzanar NHS Reach Out to LA Partners

Access to starry nights may seem like water: something that everyone should have the right to enjoy. However, as the world evolves into sprawling city- scapes and suburbs, the ever-stretching wonder of a star- filled night becomes increasingly difficult to access for many urban people.

Juan Martinez, an Expo Ranger with the Los Angeles Community Partners (LACP), said that it was the stars that really awed him the first time he visited a national park. "Here, in the city, it's so smoggy, so polluted, that if I'm lucky, maybe I'll get to see a couple of stars," Martinez said. "But being out there and watching more stars than I could count for the first time in my life, was like, 'wow.' It's what I call Mother Nature's therapy for the soul."

Martinez moved to Los Angeles (LA) from Mexico City at the age of five. He never traveled outside of an eight mile radius from his neighborhood in South Central LA until he was 16 years old. He had never visited a national park and knew nothing about the parks beyond Smokey Bear. "I saw Smokey the Bear in commercials and I knew that he was in the national parks or the forest service," Martinez said. He had also heard of rangers, but did not understand what they did. Now, Martinez can not imagine a month passing without a visit to the mountains.

The Eco- Club at Martinez's school introduced him to the national parks when the club awarded him a scholarship to visit the Teton Science School in Wyoming. "That's where I got hooked on all this outdoor stuff and I started looking for opportunities wherever I could," Martinez said. When he returned to LA, a teacher introduced him to LACP and from there he met Patrick McCullough, one of the co-founders of the Expo- Rangers.

Gregory Lee, the other co- founder, described the Expo Rangers as a dynamic mix of junior high to college age students, from various neighborhoods, socio- economic classes, ethnicities/cultures, and genders. Both Manzanar National Historic Site (MANZ) and



Juan Martinez (left) and Tatsunori Ikeda (right) measuring distances between trail station markers, Santa Monica Mountains NRA. Photo by Saifon Lee, © 2003 Earth Systems Science, Inc. (ESSI).

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SAMO) are working with the Expo Rangers through a Public Land Corps (PLC) grant. This partnership is proving to benefit the national parks and the local community in many ways.

For Martinez, the benefits have been far reaching. Expo Rangers brought Martinez to SAMO for his first time at the age of seventeen. Prior to this, he had no idea that places like SAMO, located 45 minutes from LA, existed close to his home. "My first experience was in Wyoming (at the Teton Science School) and I thought that you had to go all the way out there to experience nature," Martinez said. "Then when I came back home, I figured out that it was right down the street from me."

According to Alan Spears, representative for the Enhancing Cultural Diversity Program at the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), this is a common scenario.

"Unfortunately, there is a kind of disconnect between communities of color and the National Park Service," Spears said. "Both entities have stereotypes." He found that some Park Service employees believe that the issue of cultural diversity does not affect them. They feel that people who desire to visit the parks will do so. On the other side of the issue, Spears said that some communities of color feel that national parks are exclusive areas for recreation with no cultural components. Or they feel that the national parks are not welcoming. "Whether the stereotypes are real or perceived, they exist as barriers between closer cooperation," Spears said. "So we've got to knock them down."

Martinez also hears stereotypes. He hears that the national parks are for wealthy, white people. "I tell people that

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## Student Conservation Association

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is building the next generation of conservation leaders and inspiring lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land. Founded in 1957, SCA has nearly 40,000 alumni around the world. As many as 60% of SCA alumni become conservation professionals following their SCA service. SCA volunteers annually provide more than 1.2 million hours of conservation service—including trail construction, wildlife research, habitat restoration and GIS mapping—in parks, forests, refuges and urban green spaces in all 50 states.

### SCA conservation service programs:

**Conservation Crews:** for high school students age 15-19. These month-long, backcountry or frontcountry projects involve six-to-eight students under the supervision of trained, experienced crew leaders. SCA Crews provide a transformational experience, as members not only serve the land but also constantly challenge themselves both individually and as a team.

**Conservation Interns:** for college and graduate students as well as other young adults. Serving alongside resource management professionals, SCA Conservation Interns make substantial contributions to our natural and cultural treasures while gaining valuable new skills and career experience. Positions range in length from 12 weeks to 12 months.

**Urban and Diversity Initiatives:** for young people of color and young women—populations that are traditionally underrepresented in the conservation field. SCA provides high-school age youth with year-round training and service opportunities through its regional offices. SCA also works with government and non-profit partners to offer internships to college students from diverse backgrounds.

**Conservation Corps:** primarily residential programs for college-age and older interns including the SCA Fire Education Corps, a project helping homeowners along the wildland-urban interface reduce their risk of wildfire; the SCA Desert Restoration Corps, restoring lands scarred by illegal off-road vehicle use; and SCA AmeriCorps teams providing environmental education in rural schools and conducting conservation service projects in state parks.

Information courtesy Student Conservation Association. **For more information, please visit their website at the [www.theSCA.org](http://www.theSCA.org)**

# SCA and Channel Islands Create a Thriving Partnership

Who shall rule the sky when a helicopter chases a golden eagle? Surprisingly enough, it may be the golden eagle, as biologists at Channel Islands National Park (CHIS) discovered. As part of the Island Fox Recovery Program, CHIS hoped to chase golden eagles out of the sky and onto the ground, where biologists eagerly awaited their descent.

Derek Lohuis, CHIS District Ranger, explained that non-native golden eagles are partially responsible for the dramatic decline in the CHIS endemic island fox population. In response, CHIS began a vigorous recovery program to bring the island fox back to a sustainable population.

One stage of this recovery program was to relocate golden eagles, which prey on the island fox. Desiree Holzer, Public Land Corps (PLC) funded Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern at CHIS assisted this recovery program. "We went out for several days and sat on top of mountains with binoculars and radios," Holzer said. After spotting a golden eagle, one of the relocation team members radioed the eagle's location to a dispatcher. In turn, the dispatcher sent a helicopter out for a game of chase in hopes to tire the eagle out and lower it to the ground.

Holzer's assistance with this program, and other field and interpretive programs, has greatly benefited CHIS, which is dealing with

staff reductions. The combination of field and interpretive work has played a key role in the success of this internship. "Participating in field research aids my role in educating the public," Holzer said. "This hands-on experience helps me understand and interpret park resource stories."

Holzer's interpretive work includes guided walks, developing a Junior Ranger Program, and teaching an education-based program at the visitor's center. Besides the Island Fox Recovery Program, her other field work includes assistance with monitoring the endangered brown pelican and the Anacapa Restoration Project. The Anacapa Restoration Project is an invasive rat eradication project to improve seabird nesting habitat on the island. She will also have the opportunity to assist the park archeologist and monitor plant communities before her internship ends.

Holzer learned about SCA from a teacher in the Park Management Program at West Valley College, in California. Later, while fulfilling a seasonal ranger job at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, she began looking for a longer-term position and remembered SCA. "The conservation internship matched my objectives perfectly," Holzer said. This included gaining more experience in the

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Desiree Holzer (right), Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern, at Inspiration Point, Channel Island National Park. Photo by Derek Lohuis.



## Expo Rangers (Continued from page 1)

I am going camping and they say, 'you must be rich, and I'm like, 'no, I'm poor, poorer than you,'" he said.

When Martinez reflects on why he did not know about the parks four years ago, he feels that it stems from a lack of outreach from the national parks toward inner cities. "I've never seen a park ranger around here and in the schools, they don't talk much about it," Martinez said. "Even by the media, you don't hear much about it."

Lee said that if you knocked door to door in some of the neighborhoods where Expo Rangers work, probably a vast majority of the people have heard of the parks, but have never visited one. "Parks are in out of the way places, so for most people, transportation becomes an issue," Lee said. "In lower-economic groups, going to the parks is a luxury type of thing." In addition to transportation, parks with entrance fees also make these parks increasingly difficult for lower-income families to access. Martinez's family exemplifies how leisure time is also a luxury. His parents work full time and go to night school, so his family had to sacrifice to go on one of the Expo Ranger outings.

Beyond lack of economic resources and stereotypes, social scientists find additional barriers that cut off communities of color. These barriers include historical discrimination, differences in values and socialization patterns, and perceived, actual and institutional discrimination (Floyd, 1999). People may argue over which barrier they believe is the number one cause of low cultural diversity in parks. However, regardless of the source, statistics clearly demonstrate that a large gap exists between Caucasians and communities of color when it comes to park visitation and employment.

Even in parks near ethnically diverse areas like LA, visitors continue to be primarily Caucasian. According to the US Census 2000, Caucasians are the minority in Los Angeles at 47 percent. However, Caucasians are found in nearly every visitor group at SAMO, while only eight percent of visitor groups include Hispanic Americans, four percent include African Americans, and ten percent include "other" minority groups (Floyd, 1999).

This lack of cultural diversity in park visitation could partly be due to park staff, which also tends to be predominantly white. Currently, eighty percent of national park employees are Caucasian; this can lead to a racially exclusive feeling to communities of color. By the year 2050, ethnic minorities are expected to comprise over 47 percent of the US population (Floyd, 1999). These evolving



Expo Rangers take cross slope measurements at Santa Monica Mountains NRA. Photo by Saifon Lee, © 2003 Earth Systems Science, Inc. (ESSI).

demographics mean that parks need to aggressively work to heighten their cultural diversity or else they will rapidly fall further from reflecting the true demographics of our country.

Increasing the cultural diversity in parks is not only important for the inherent reason that these natural and cultural treasures should be accessible to all people, but also because threats to the national parks are increasing. Spears pointed out that as the demographics change in our country, the number of traditional park and environmental advocates in the United States decrease. Therefore, enhancing the cultural diversity of the parks is a park issue, because in order to preserve these natural and cultural resources, it is important to build a wide base of support.

Spears believes that in order for the parks to become more culturally diverse, park staff needs to make a deliberate effort to introduce themselves to these communities and engage them in park stewardship activities. He points out that it is important to design stewardship activities in ways that are relevant to communities of color. As a result of this realization, NPS created the Community Partners Program, which includes the Los Angeles Community Partners (LACP). "The LACP group is a true representation of ethnically diverse Los Angeles," Charles Taylor, Chief of External Affairs at SAMO, said. The Expo Rangers are part of LACP through an intricate web of partnerships.

Now, the parks and Expo Rangers partnership is beginning to dismantle some of the cultural barriers that are intricately

## Public Land Corps

On May 27, 1993, the United States Congress approved the creation of the Public Land Corps (PLC) in order to carry out five main goals. First, to complete conservation projects that existing employees cannot do in a cost-effective manner. Second, to assist governments and Indian tribes in performing research and public education resources. Third, to expose young adults to public service while heightening their understanding and appreciation of the nation's natural and cultural resources. Fourth, to expand educational opportunities for individuals who do national service by increasing their ability to pursue higher education or job training. Fifth, to stimulate the next generation's interest in conservation careers by exposing them to conservation professionals.

woven into our society. Beyond this, the partnership has many additional benefits.

For the parks, this partnership offers an opportunity to complete backlogged projects and creates an opportunity for inner-city youth to experience national parks. At MANZ, Expo Rangers are using Global Positioning System (GPS) to map out the cultural landscape. Last year, they mapped out culturally important trees threatened by the dropping water table. This year, Expo Rangers are mapping out the historical road network. Frank Hays, Superintendent at MANZ, said that the road network at MANZ has become overgrown and it is hard to tell that an internment camp of over 10,000 people used to exist there. This was during World War II, when MANZ was a War Relocation Center for Japanese-American citizens and resident Japanese aliens.

In 1992, MANZ was established as the Manzanar National Historic Site to be preserved for future generations. It is a good example of the cultural and historical significance that parks can carry. There are also other layers of history and culture in the soils of MANZ. At the base of these layers are the Paiute Indians, who gathered roots and farmed the valley for centuries. Then, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries Euro-Americans moved into the valley to ranch and farm fruit orchards.

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# Expo Rangers

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Visiting a park with such historical significance proved to be a meaningful experience for many Expo Rangers. One of Martinez's peer Expo Rangers, Tatsunori Ikeda, a Japanese exchange student, visited MANZ for the first time with the Expo Rangers. Ikeda's grandmother, uncles, and aunts lived under the bombing of World War II and he grew up listening to his grandfather's (who was in the Japanese army) wartime stories. "As a young child, I was always wondering about the wartime stories of the other side, the people who won the war," Ikeda said. "A decade later there I was standing in front of one of a few graves left at the site, witnessing the other side of the story told by Americans who looked like me and spoke like me."

Ikeda found it difficult to visit the park, but also very meaningful and broadening for his view. "Because of this experience, I became aware of what is going on in the world," he said. As a result, Ikeda became involved in human rights organizations. Later this year, he will exhibit his MANZ photography in Tokyo at an Amnesty Japan exhibition.

Another element of cultural and historical learning and sharing could stem from the Expo Rangers connecting with the local Paiute tribal group. Lee hopes that in the future, the Expo Rangers can recruit some members from this community to help with the MANZ project.

Closer to Los Angeles, the Expo Rangers are also completing a trail assessment project at SAMO. "Santa Monica [SAMO] has been working with LACP for a long time," Taylor said. However, this is the first time that PLC has funded one of LACP's projects at SAMO. This project will examine appropriate uses for the park's trail systems. "It's work that we would have had to have done ourselves, so it's a creative solution," Taylor said. He said that the park would not have been able to complete a trail assessment with their current financial priorities, but that SAMO would have eventually done a trail assessment at the expense of other park programs.

In addition to the completion of this backlogged project, Taylor is also pleased about how the Expo Rangers will benefit. "We're excited that we get the chance to be a part of this positive experience for these young people, particularly because we get to work with young people that live in the area," Taylor said. "Whether they come to work for us, or they become good land stewards or camping enthusiasts, I'm just glad to know that we've done something good along the way."



Expo Rangers Co-founders, Patrick McCullough (left) and Gregory Lee (middle). Expo Ranger, Juan Martinez (right). Photo by Saifon Lee, © 2003, Earth Systems Science, Inc. (ESSI).

Lee and McCullough designed the Expo Rangers program in a holistic and innovative way to create these positive outcomes and more. "It's not only a skills oriented program, but it also helps kids think about careers in environmental advocacy," Spears said. He said the program helps Expo Rangers with a number of marketable skills, including conflict-resolution skills, peer-monitoring, and a heightened understanding about NPS employment. Additionally, professionals, such as botanists and historical and cultural staff, visit the young folks in the field, Spears said.

Furthermore, to help meet NPCA's goals of heightening the cultural diversity in the parks, Lee designed the Expo Rangers curriculum to ready Expo Rangers for entry-level NPS jobs. To do this, he included lessons from his geography classes at Pasadena City College, such as measuring slope angle, doing field mapping, and using rudimentary GPS. "They're taking college-level curriculum and passing it on to high school folks," Spears said. "It's one of the most progressive, dynamic and thorough programs I've ever heard of."

Martinez found the trail survey project to be different than what he expected of an NPS job. "Most of the time when I think of working for the national parks, I think of cleaning up trails or doing hard labor," Martinez said. He was excited to find that the Expo Rangers work was academically based. "It feels nice to know that I have that knowledge and I can share it with other people," he said.

To complement these lessons, Lee also found documents that detailed the qualities sought in employees for certain jobs. This included entry-level NPS job descriptions and the Secretary's Commission on Achieving

Necessary Skills (SCANS). Lee explained that SCANS is a checklist of skills and abilities employers expect of employees.

"We give kids these checklists while in the field," Lee said. "Then to check their knowledge, we have the kids teach new kids coming in." Lee explained that there is no closing date for enrollment in the Expo Rangers program. This creates an open enrollment program where Expo Rangers train and peer-monitor new members. "We're training them to run the program themselves," Lee said.

This open enrollment is vital, not only because of the opportunity for leadership development, but also because some Expo Rangers come from challenging home situations and, consequently, participate intermittently. McCullough and Lee try to keep participation as open and flexible as possible. "We try to give them the sense that even though you're not here all the time, you can still belong and you are always welcome," Lee said.

Lee also hopes that peer-teaching will encourage younger Expo Rangers to enroll in college. Some of the Expo Rangers are college students enrolled in Lee's geography classes at Pasadena City College, so they can serve as positive role models. Lee said that most urban youth do not have peer role models or people in their families who have attended college. "It's one thing for me, as a professor, to tell them to go to college, but it's another thing when it comes from their peers," Lee said.

Another unique aspect of the Expo Rangers program, is the diverse age range. Ages extend from 11 to 52, some of them are returning adult learners. This broad age range allows for continuity from middle

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parks, developing new skills, and starting to pay off school loans. Eventually, Holzer hopes to find a permanent position in the preservation of parklands and wild places.

For Julie Christian, this goal of park employment beyond internship came true. Christian held three SCA internships at CHIS in 2001 and 2002. PLC completely funded two of these internships and partially funded the third. Her first two internships of eight months each, focused on interpretation, and resource management and vegetation monitoring, respectively.

"The first position helped me get the second position, because they wanted an internal hire," Christian said. Her third internship, which also focused on vegetation monitoring, lasted three months until she was swooped up by Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SAMO) for a two year term position as a biological science technician.

Christian said the SCA positions with CHIS helped her attain the position she has now. "The second and third SCA position gave me the actual field and botany skills," Christian said. She learned to identify plants at CHIS similar to the plants she identifies now in the vegetation mapping project at SAMO. CHIS and SAMO both share a rare Mediterranean climate zone.

Christian is also the field coordinator for the SAMO vegetation mapping project. She believes that her first SCA internship as an interpreter helped give her the necessary leadership and human relation skills for the field coordinator piece of her position. She also credits several other aspects of her SCA internship for strengthening her hiring potential within the National Park Service. "I learned how to work within the National Park Service, and it helped having contacts in the park," Christian said.

Like Christian, Holzer is also thankful for the ways her internship deepens her understanding of the parks. "This internship is giving me an opportunity to grow and network and learn more about park partners like SCA," Holzer said. "It has allowed me to

develop a more holistic understanding about park management including the importance of partnership."

Derek Lohuis, CHIS District Ranger who supervises Holzer's position, is also very pleased with this partnership. "With reduction in staff we need SCAs and PLC funding," Lohuis said. He listed many ways in which this PLC funded position benefits CHIS. Inventory and monitoring programs, like the ones Holzer is assisting, are important to the park because they document population trends and gather baseline data. For example, CHIS started to study the island fox in the early nineties and a dramatic decline began to appear after 1994. Lohuis believes that this decline may have gone unnoticed if CHIS had not monitored the population. Monitoring data helped CHIS "implement an aggressive recovery program to bring island fox populations back to viable levels," Lohuis said.

Besides Holzer's assistance with monitoring and inventory projects, Lohuis has also been very pleased with her contributions to interpretation at CHIS. While hiring for the SCA position this year, Lohuis kept the development of a Junior Ranger Program in mind. He looked for someone who had a background in education and experience with kids to launch the program. "CHIS has never had a Junior Ranger Program in the past," Lohuis said. "It's always been talked about, but has never happened." Lohuis is pleased that PLC funding is enabling this to develop, because the program introduces kids to the importance of the parks. He noted that a thirty percent reduction in interpretation staff in the last couple of years and limited funding has inhibited the creation of this program in the past.

As part of the Junior Ranger Program, Holzer is creating a booklet for kids who visit the park. "All of the activities in the book invite kids and their families to explore park resources. One of our goals is to encourage participants to become stewards of their parks and their communities," Holzer said. "A first step toward stewardship includes directly introducing visitors to the unique plants, animals and cultural history of the park."

Holzer understands the importance of hands-on learning from personal experience. She vividly recalls her first trip out to the Channel Islands for an interpretive tide pool talk. "I remember being blown away by the number of species in the tidal area, species that I wouldn't have seen if I wasn't looking closely and carefully," she said. "I vividly recall the exhilaration of discovery. I hoped to return and experience more of the park."



Desiree Holzer, SCA intern, on interpretive walk at Channel Islands National Park. Photo by Derek Lohuis.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Who is eligible and how do I apply for a PLC project (grant)?**

A. All parks that are not high revenue parks may apply for a PLC grant from fee demo 20% funds. High revenue parks may apply from other funding sources such as fee demo 80%. Parks must submit project statements via PMIS. All applicants must identify their partner(s) for the project(s) and have a cooperative agreement in place to transfer funds.

**Q. How do I submit PLC proposal(s)?**

A. Visit the regional budget guidelines at <http://www.inside.nps.gov>. Once inside NPS, go to *Pacific West Region*, then to *Comprehensive Budget Call* on the right side bar, then click on *Public Land Corps*.

**Q. What partners are eligible to work with NPS units?**

A. National, state, and local non-profit youth-serving organizations with conservation project experience, i.e., conservation corps, SCA, and tribes.

**Q. May parks apply for more than one grant?**

A. Yes, however each grant must go towards one specific project.

**Q. Do parks have to use PLC funding to partner with SCA?**

A. No, PLC is simply one avenue to funding in order to partner with SCA.

**Q. May PLC funds be used to support salaries of NPS personnel?**

A. No!

**Q. What mechanism will be used to transfer funds to PLC partners?**

A. NPS units will use cooperative agreements, contracts, etc., to transfer funds. Partnerships with SCA can be implemented by utilizing the national cooperative agreement.

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Now, 16 years later, Holzer has returned to CHIS for her first time since her childhood visit. Before the end of her internship, she hopes to participate in the program that she initially explored the park with, in order to revisit that fifth grade feeling at the tide pools. However, as she explores the tide pools this time, she will hold a deepened understanding of the intricate stories that humans, wildlife and weather have woven into the islands.

- Michelle Burkhart,  
Columbia Cascades Support Office

## Q&A (Continued from page 5)

### Q. How may PLC funds be used?

A. Funding must emphasize participants' stipends or wages. Lesser amounts may fund equipment, transportation, housing, and materials. Funding components must be identified in the PMIS project statement. Most partners must conform with state minimum wage requirements, except in cases where stipends or living allowances are stipulated in an existing cooperative agreement (i.e., with SCA).

### Q. What is the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC)?

A. NASCC serves as an advocate for 118 corps members at the federal level and as a central clearinghouse of information on how to start and run a corps. For more information, please visit their website at [www.nascc.org](http://www.nascc.org) or call 202.737.6272.

### Q. Are projects costing more than \$20,000 eligible?

A. Grants are limited to \$20,000, however, costs above \$20,000 may be borne by the unit, youth-serving partner, and/or other partners.

### Q. Where else may an NPS unit or partner look for matching or donated funds?

A. Cooperating associations, Friends groups, foundations, benevolent associations, etc.

### Q. What projects are allowable under the PLC program?

A. Any maintenance, restoration, repair, or rehabilitation projects on the unit's backlog list, e.g., trails, facilities, habitat restoration. All appropriate safety procedures and appropriateness of work for ages involved should be taken into consideration. See NPS Loss Control Management Program Guideline (NPS-50).

### Q. What criteria will be used to rank and select PLC proposals for funding?

A. Criteria:

- Completeness/thoroughness of proposals - i.e., identified partner, project on backlog list
- Experience, effective use of, and strength of partnership with partner organization
- Clarity of goals and objectives
- Extent to which NPS unit provides matching funds (Note: match not required)
- Cost-effectiveness, creative identification and use of partnership
- Educational value to participants
- Willingness to publicize the projects through local media and park publications.

# Students Help Restore North Cascades National Park

Two hundred students from inner city Seattle rolled up their sleeves this past summer to help North Cascades National Park restore natural ecosystems. Through a partnership with EarthCorps, 12 to 17 year old students helped prepare the North Cascades greenhouse for fall plantings and pulled six thousand feet of non-native invasive plants. In return, students learned about the ecosystems they restored through fun, interactive lessons. Based upon students' evaluations, we heard they appreciated this opportunity to make a difference and learn about their national parks. One student asked, "Can we do this in Seattle?"

That question has led Seattle City Parks Community Centers to consider how they can further this program in these students' home communities. The community centers have already secured funding to develop trainings for their Teen Development Leaders so they can be more prepared to take advantage of the National Park Service (NPS) restoration workshops this summer. At the trainings, Teen Development Leaders will learn about restoration and stewardship education skills. They will also learn more about natural and cultural resources in both national and city parks and about "leave no trace" principles. Their task will be to apply these skills to projects in their local parks.

Thanks to funding by the Public Land Corps (PLC), this project evolved into a multi-layered partnership between the National Park Service, EarthCorps, the City of Seattle, Seattle

City Light and numerous other non-profit youth groups. EarthCorps, a non-profit Seattle based restoration group, led the program on the ground in partnership with the resource education and natural resources staff of North Cascades National Park. EarthCorps' history in working with youth volunteer groups on large-scale ecological restoration projects played a key role in creating a high quality program. Their experienced leaders enable their volunteer projects to successfully compete for restoration contracts to work for the US Forest Service, the City of Seattle and King County, among others. The North Coast and Cascades Learning Network staff coordinated the program, adding another layer to the rich partnership that made this program successful.

For most participants, and many adult leaders, this was their first visit to a national park. Thanks to Seattle City Light's donated bunkhouse, many also spent their first night in a park. This year, another PLC grant will enable the program to expand to Mount Rainier, giving parks an opportunity to reach out to the local communities near Mount Rainier and other students in the southern Puget Sound area. This project's success with integrating students' experiences in national parks and their home communities makes it a good model for developing a network of partnered local and national youth outreach programs.

- Lisa Eschenbach, Columbia Cascades Support Office



Top: North Cascades National Park. Bottom: Volunteer from Seattle Parks' Van Asselt Community Center pulling non-native invasive weeds. Photos by Chris LaPointe.

# Marin Conservation Corps: Building a Second Chance for a Positive Future

Every conservation corps has its own unique assets. For corps members of the Marin Conservation Corps (MCC), it is the unique opportunity to continue education while working and earning a sustainable wage.

MCC, located in Marin County, CA, began in 1982. It is the oldest local, private, non-profit conservation corps in the country and provides Marin County youth with employment, education, and training opportunities. Corps members have the opportunity to work on a variety of crews in MCC, including natural resource crews, a recycling crew, a habitat restoration crew, and an environmental education crew. PLC many times funds the natural resource crews, which focus on conservation projects to preserve local ecosystems. While on the crew, corps members learn about trail reconstruction, habitat restoration, and how to reduce flood and fire dangers in state and national parks, and in open spaces around Marin County.

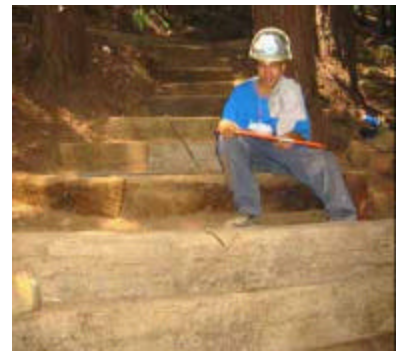
MCC corps members are usually 18 to 30 years old and categorized as “at risk youth,” Carl Sanders, MCC Natural Resource Manager, said. “Many are high school drop outs, haven’t had a job before, or haven’t been able to keep a job.” Corps members usually work with MCC for the year, and work a regular work week. They go into the field Monday through Thursday, and spend Friday in the classroom. Friday’s curriculum varies depending on individual corps member interests. MCC’s educational staff develops curriculum based on member’s specific needs, which is assessed through applications. The curriculum may focus on job skills training, English as a Second Language (ESL), test taking, college entry

preparation, interviewing skills, resume writing or high school diploma. There are also elective classes in areas such as first aid, plant identification, internships, and class B driving (for small passenger vans or buses).

MCC teachers also accompany crews in the field. Here, topics range from plant identification to ESL to math related to work site construction. On Fridays, teachers link the project-based learning into lesson plans. Parks also send staff into the field with MCC to provide education in areas such as botany and natural history.

MCC completes an average of three PLC funded projects a year. The grants usually run between 15,000 to 20,000 dollars a project, which pays for corps members and MCC staff. Each project lasts about three weeks and MCC finds other funding sources for remaining projects in the year.

Point Reyes National Seashore (PORE) first partnered with MCC in the mid 1980’s and then resumed the partnership in 1995. PORE has consistently contracted with MCC every time they have received a PLC grant, said Shawn Maloney, who is PORE’s site supervisor for MCC crews. Maloney describes himself as the liaison between the park and MCC. “I make sure they are doing the assigned work up to the park standard,” he said. Maloney believes that the quality and efficiency of the project depends upon the park liaison. He emphasized the importance of communicating with the corps crew supervisor. “It’s up to the park liaison to



**MCC Natural Resource Corpsmember with newly completed staircase. Photo by MarneeChua.**

make sure they understand the project,” Maloney said. “They easily fulfill the park standard if the liaison does their job.”

Besides MCC’s projects at PORE, other PLC funded MCC projects have included building 1,200 feet of split rail fence in Muir Woods and improving backcountry sites at Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). This year, MCC has PLC grants to replace historic fencing around a WWII gun battery at Marin Headlands, replace old fencing at Muir Woods, and do major trail improvement at PORE.

Sanders said that the corps members usually learn the more technical skills with PLC funded projects. “PLC is definitely a complement to skills they are picking up the rest of the year,” he said. However, with MCC the skills reach far beyond hard labor skills. They assist many Marin County youth in a second chance to a high school diploma, a college education or the skills they need for a successful career.

-Michelle Burkhart,  
Columbia Cascades Support Office

## **Running a Smooth PLC Program: A Review of Regional Requirements**

The Servicewide Public Land Corps Program is funded from 20% Fee Demonstration dollars. In 2003, this amount was 4 million, with the Pacific West Region receiving \$980,000. The program is a highly popular means to partnering, completing backlogged work, and providing work skills to young adults. A few reminders will help keep this program progressing smoothly:

All projects are limited to \$20,000, with the partner providing at least a 25% match in funds, which can include in-kind services. High revenue parks are ineligible for PLC funds, however, these parks can submit projects under other funding sources (e.g. fee demo 80%).

- WASO and its primary partners reviews the projects based on three categories: NASCC (conservation corps that are members of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps), the Student Conservation Association (SCA), and Other. Usually, the NASCC category has the most submittals, and therefore the most unfunded, projects.
- Make sure you have the appropriate details

entered into PMIS – and make sure your partner can do the work before submitting the project. *It may not be possible to change the nature of the work or the partner category once a project has been approved based on what is entered into PMIS.*

- All work must have a cooperative agreement in place to handle transfer of funds. For SCA, use the national cooperative agreement (No. H0001020002) developed by the WASO Youth Programs Division.
- Make sure you start your project title in PMIS with: “PLC” (then list the project title). This is important!
- Identify in one component (e.g. component A), the project description for the amount up to \$20,000, and in the next sequential component (e.g. component B), identify the matching partner amount (which should be at least 25% of the first component).
- Accomplishment (completion) or progress reports are due by December 31 in PMIS. And don’t forget to include your diversity report in your completion report. **These reports are a requirement of the program and a requisite for future funding.** Make sure you identify measured results, e.g., miles of trail rehabilitated. Include the number of

participants, name of the partner organization, the type of asset, and the appraised value. A summary of these park reports will be included in the annual NPS Report to Congress on the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program.

For assistance with program requirements and operation, contact Sonya Capek in the Seattle Support Office at 206-220-4271. For assistance with PMIS and accounts, contact Rhonda Davis in PWR Budget at 510-817-1312.

-Sonya Capek, Seattle Support Office





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## EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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## Expo Rangers

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school to college. However, only the 16 to 26-year-olds are eligible to be paid by the PLC grant. Spears sees this age restriction in a positive light. "One of the reasons we like PLC is because you have to connect with youth programs for a PLC grant," Spears said. "Lots of parks didn't have this connection with youth before, especially with youth

from diverse backgrounds." Spears believes that it is important to work with all age groups, but that working with youth can especially create a new generation of park lovers and park advocates. He said that parents also tend to learn along the way.

This rings true with Martinez's family, who went camping for their first time with the Expo Rangers. Martinez said that his family now understands his passion for the outdoors and that it opened up their trust for his outdoor activities. "Before that they were hesitant towards letting me go to training and now they are much more open," Martinez said. "It's definitely made a difference in my family."

Recently, Martinez's father went so far as to buy a backpack that he saw at a yard sale for Martinez. "I don't know if before that, he would have done it," Martinez said. He also got to see a new side of his parents when the Expo Rangers did a "teach-back" (taught their families) about the flora and fauna on the Expo Ranger family trip. "When we were teaching back and we would ask people if they knew something about it, my parents would actually answer," Martinez said. "I was like, 'wow, my parents do know some of this stuff.'" It was during this teach-back that Martinez discovered that his family used to use the yucca plant for food.

Martinez said it was "one of a kind" to share

this camping experience with his family. "I've gotten to go camping before and I always came back and talked to them about the places I saw and the stars, but you can't describe it. It's an indescribable feeling," he said. "So to be able to share it with my family was very special."

At the same time, he is learning that environmental issues are not isolated to "natural" ecosystems. "I'm learning that you don't have to go out there [outside the city] to be an environmentalist," Martinez said. "You can also be an environmentalist within the city." He is realizing the many ways in which environmental issues affect all people, including economic and personal health impacts.

All in all, Martinez believes that his experiences in the parks have greatly impacted his life. "Before, I really didn't know what I wanted to do and now I do and it's my passion," he said. Now, Martinez plans to become an environmental attorney. He is the first high school graduate in his family and the first to go to college. "Being in this environmental field, opened up a whole new world to me," Martinez said. "I'm just happy I made that move."

- Michelle Burkhart, Columbia Cascades Support Office

Source cited: Floyd, Dr. Myron. 1999. Social Science Research Review (Spring/Summer 1999). Race, Ethnicity, and Use of the National Park System. Texas A&M University.